Lightning Myths & Facts

Q: *Does lightning travel: upward or downward?*

The answer, along with several other myths and facts appear below.

Fact: The temperature of a typical lightning bolt is hotter than the surface of the Sun (nearly 50,000 degrees F).

Myth: If it is not raining, there is no danger from lightning.

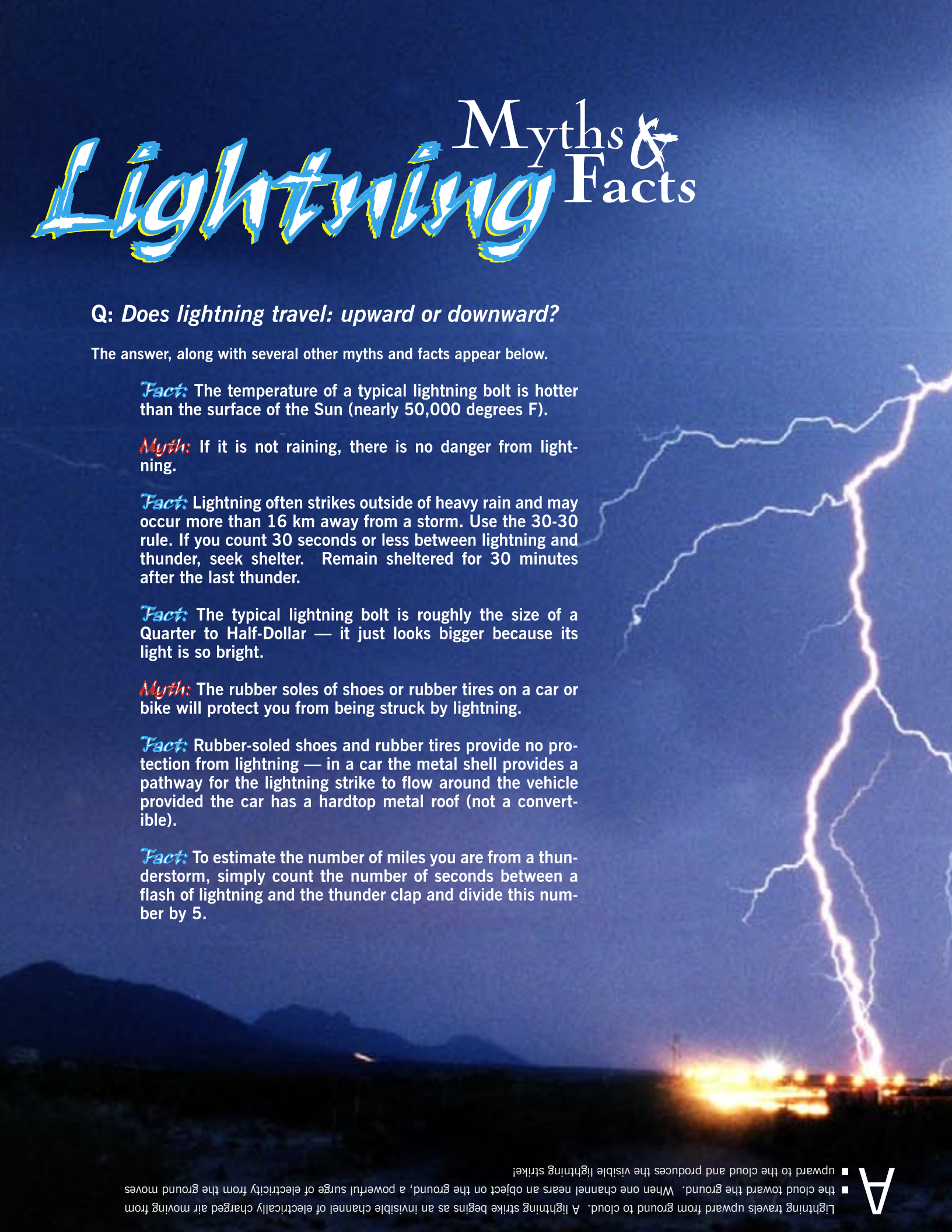
Fact: Lightning often strikes outside of heavy rain and may occur more than 16 km away from a storm. Use the 30-30 rule. If you count 30 seconds or less between lightning and thunder, seek shelter. Remain sheltered for 30 minutes after the last thunder.

Fact: The typical lightning bolt is roughly the size of a Quarter to Half-Dollar — it just looks bigger because its light is so bright.

Myth: The rubber soles of shoes or rubber tires on a car or bike will protect you from being struck by lightning.

Fact: Rubber-soled shoes and rubber tires provide no protection from lightning — in a car the metal shell provides a pathway for the lightning strike to flow around the vehicle provided the car has a hardtop metal roof (not a convertible).

Fact: To estimate the number of miles you are from a thunderstorm, simply count the number of seconds between a flash of lightning and the thunder clap and divide this number by 5.



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- Lightning travels upward from ground to cloud. A lightning strike begins as an invisible channel of electrically charged air moving from the cloud toward the ground. When one channel nears an object on the ground, a powerful surge of electricity from the ground moves upward to the cloud and produces the visible lightning strike!